

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PRS-01 H-02 SSM-05
PA-02 USIE-00 INR-07 INRE-00 SS-15 SSO-00 EB-07 DHA-02
MCT-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 /091 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:MKBERRY
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
S/PRS - MR. FUNSETH (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY

----- 020688 /70

O 160208Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR

UNCLAS STATE 304677

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - DECEMBER 15

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR
DECEMBER 15, 1976:

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY READING ON SHEIKH YAMANI'S COMMENT
YESTERDAY?

A. WHICH COMMENT ARE YOU REFERRING TO?

Q. SAUDI ARABIA WILL DO WHAT IT CAN TO FREEZE OIL
PRICES FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS.

A. THE UNITED STATES, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN AND REMAINS
STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ANY INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF OIL AT
THIS TIME. THEREFORE, WE WELCOME THE STATEMENT BY
MR. YAMANI AND WE THINK IT DEMONSTRATES A STATESMANLIKE
ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT.

Q. DO WE HAVE AN OBSERVER AT THE OPEC MEETING?

A. I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T THINK SO. LET ME CHECK ON

THAT. (ANSWER POSTED SUBSEQUENTLY: "NO.")
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Q. IS THAT TO SAY THAT THE UNITED STATES IS FAIRLY WELL
PERSUADED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WILL USE ITS MUSCLE AT THIS
MEETING TO FREEZE PRICES?

A. WELL, AS FOR MR. YAMANI'S POSITION, IT IS UP TO HIM
TO DEFINE HIS OWN POSITION AND I THINK HE HAS. I DON'T
HAVE ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT.

Q. I KNOW THAT HE WILL DEFINE HIS OWN POSITION. I AM
ASKING FOR YOUR READING OF IT.

A. I AM NOT ABLE TO READ INTO IT ANY MORE THAN WHAT HE
SAID.

Q. DO YOU ACCEPT IT IN FULL FAITH, IN OTHER WORDS?

A. SURE.

Q. ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT DETECT ANY DIFFERENCE IN THE PLO ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EXISTANCE OF THE STATE, A RECONGITION OF THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST IN ITS MOST RECENT STATEMENTS?

A. WE DO NOT SEE ANY CHANGE IN THE PLO POSITION.

Q. IN THE PAST FIVE OR SIX WEEKS THERE HAVE BEEN MANY STATEMENTS FROM CAIRO AT LEAST ONE INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OF SYRIA REGARDING PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS OR SOME KIND OF A SETTLEMENT. HAS OUR GOVERNMENT RECEIVED ANYTHING FROM ANY OF THESE GOVERNMENTS IN CAIRO OR DAMASCUS OR AMMAN OR RIYADH DEALING WITH THE POSSIBILITIES OF A CONFERENCE, ON WHAT TERMS OR ANYTHING AT ALL RELATED TO THESE STATEMENTS THAT ARE GIVEN TO THE AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN AND THE AMERICAN PRESS?

A. WELL, I AM NOT ABLE TO RESPOND SPECIFICALLY TO THAT KIND OF A QUESTION. I AM NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON VARIOUS DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WE MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE HAD OR ARE HAVING. OUR OWN POSITION IS CLEAR AND WE WOULD UNCLASSIFIED

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HOPE THAT ALL PARTIES TO THE QUESTION WOULD COME TOGETHER AND WORK OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES BY WHATEVER MEANS THEY ARE ABLE TO AGREE TO.

Q. BUT THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE

AGREEMENTS, THE LAST TWO AGREEMENTS, INVOLVING THE NEAR EAST AND, THEREFORE, THE UNITED STATES IS LOOKED UPON AS BEING THE MEDIATOR IN THE DISPUTE WHETHER THIS IS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR NOT. BUT, THEY KEPT TALKING ABOUT THIS DURING THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN AND SINCE. WHERE DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT STAND NOW?

A. ON WHAT?

Q. ON THE QUESTION OF THE STATEMENTS BEING MADE BY THE ARAB LEADERS.

A. YOU KNOW, IT ISN'T ONLY THE ARAB LEADERS THAT HAVE BEEN MAKING STATEMENTS. THERE ARE STATEMENTS OUT OF ISRAEL ALSO.

Q. WELL, ALL RIGHT.

A. BUT, OUR POSITION REMAINS THE SAME AS FAR AS THE SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS CONCERNED AND WE ARE PREPARED TO OFFER WHATEVER ASSISTANCE WE CAN TO FURTHER THAT GOAL. BUT, I AM NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE YOU EITHER AN INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT ON VARIOUS STATEMENTS BY VARIOUS PARTIES NOR ON THE EXCHANGES THAT WE MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN HAVING WITH VARIOUS PARTIES TO THE QUESTION.

Q. COULD I GO BACK TO MY EARLIER QUESTION? SOME PEOPLE HAVE DETECTED AN APPARENT WILLINGNESS OF THE PLO IN LIGHT OF THE--FROM THE RECENT STATEMENTS TO ACCEPT SOME KIND OF ISRAELI STATE AND NOT DEMAND ITS REPLACEMENT BY A DEMOCRATIC NONSECTARIAN STATE. YOU DON'T SEE THAT FROM THEIR STATEMENTS.

A. NO. I AM NOT PREPARED TO COMMENT ON THESE VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS.
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Q. BOB, ON A RELATED MATTER, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON A LEBANESE SPECIAL EMISSARY COMING HERE TO DISCUSS RECONSTRUCTION AND U.S. FINANCIAL AID?

A. MR. GHASSAN TUEINI, WHO HAS HELD THE RANK OF MINISTER IN PREVIOUS LEBANESE CABINETS, ARRIVED IN WASHINGTON YESTERDAY. HE ARRIVED YESTERDAY TO MEET WITH OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT, AID, AS WELL AS THE IBRD AND IMF. HE HAD APPOINTMENTS TO MEET WITH MR. HABIB AND MR. ATHERTON TODAY.

I WOULD DESCRIBE HIS DISCUSSIONS AT THIS STAGE AS PRELIMINARY AND EXPLORATORY, AND OBVIOUSLY WILL PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FUTURE PLANNING.

I WOULD RECALL THAT HE HAS COME HERE IN RESPONSE TO OUR INVITATION--WHICH WE ADDRESSED TO LEBANESE PRESIDENT SARKIS --TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THE WAYS IN WHICH WE COULD BE HELPFUL IN LEBANESE EFFORTS TO REBUILD LEBANON'S NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ECONOMY.

Q. WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE TALKS? IS IT ON DIRECT AMERICAN AID OR WORLD BANK, IMF--A MIXTURE?

A. A MIXTURE. BILATERAL AS WELL AS MULTILATERAL.

Q. DO YOU HAVE A FIGURE ON WHAT THE U.S. AID MIGHT BE?

A. NO. THESE ARE EXPLORATORY TALKS.

Q. DO YOU HAVE A FIGURE OF WHAT HE IS ASKING FOR?

A. NO, I DO NOT. I THINK WE HAVE EXTENDED ALMOST US DOLS 20 MILLION IN THE LAST YEAR OURSELVES. AND I THINK WE HAVE SOUGHT FROM THE CONGRESS--WELL, THIS WAS PART OF THE APPROPRIATION WE SOUGHT FROM THE CONGRESS. BUT FOR THE PRESENT TALKS--I DO NOT HAVE ANY PRECISE FIGURES FOR YOU.

Q. IS THERE ANY REASON WHY THAT MEETING WAS LEFT OFF MR. HABIB'S SCHEDULE?

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A. I DO NOT KNOW WHY. I THINK IT WAS NOT FIXED AT THE TIME THE SCHEDULE WAS PUT OUT, BUT I DO NOT HAVE A REASON.

Q. DID YOU SAY US DOLS 20 MILLION IN AID TO LEBANON THIS PAST YEAR?

A. I THINK IT WAS CLOSE TO TWENTY IN THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS.

Q. DID THE STATE DEPARTMENT GET WORD PRIVATELY OF WHAT SHEIKHYAMANI WAS GOING TO SAY YESTERDAY?

A. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER WE HAD ANY ADVANCE WORD. I DO NOT THINK WE DID, NO.

Q. COULD YOU CHECK THAT, PLEASE?

A. YES. (ANSWER POSTED SUBSEQUENTLY: "NO.")

Q. DID MR. VANCE CHECK WITH MR. KISSINGER ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH THE SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR?

A. I DO NOT KNOW. YOU WOULD HAVE TO ASK MR. VANCE. I KNOW THEY HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ONE ANOTHER ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF THE OPEC MEETING.

Q. THE SECRETARY HAS SAID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT HE AND THE PRESIDENT REMAIN RESPONSIBLE FOR AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL JANUARY 20TH. IS IT THEREFORE ALL RIGHT WITH HIM THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE-DESIGNATE BEGIN A SERIES OF CONTACTS WITH THE KEY ARAB STATES OBVIOUSLY INVOLVED WITH A RANGE OF PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE PRICE OF OIL?

A. I HAVE NOT RAISED THAT SPECIFIC QUESTION WITH THE SECRETARY, BUT IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING OR ASSUMPTION THAT HE HAS NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.

Q. I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE. WILL YOU ILLUMINATE US A LITTLE BIT? IS IT MY UNDERSTANDING FROM THE QUESTION AND ANSWER THAT SECRETARY-DESIGNATE

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VANCE IS GOING TO SEE ARAB LEADERS ABOUT THE OIL QUESTION AND OTHER QUESTIONS DEALING WITH THE MIDDLE EAST BEFORE HE ASSUMES THE OFFICE?

A. MR VANCE HAS CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD A CONVERSATION WITH THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR.

Q. YES. WHAT ELSE?

A. THAT IS ALL HE HAS CONFIRMED.

Q. DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER MEETINGS HE HAS HAD WITH OTHER ARAB OR OTHER GOVERNMENTS, FOR THAT MATTER?

A. NO, I DO NOT. I DO NOT HAVE HIS COMPLETE SCHEDULE.

Q. ARE YOU SAYING ALSO THAT THIS IS WITH THE BLESSING OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER?

A. NO, I DID NOT SAY THAT. MARVIN ASKED ME IF I THOUGHT THE SECRETARY HAD ANY PROBLEMS WITH MR. VANCE HAVING A MEETING WITH THE SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR, AND I SAID I DID NOT THINK SO.

Q. WELL, CAN WE PUT IT A LITTLE BIT MORE POSITIVELY? HAS THE SECRETARY APPROVED OR WELCOMED THIS STEP BY THE SECRETARY-DESIGNATE?

A. I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. AS FAR AS APPROVED, I HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING. I DO NOT BELIEVE MR. VANCE CALLED THE SECRETARY BEFORE, BUT I DO NOT KNOW.

I DO KNOW THAT IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS THEY HAVE HAD SINCE THEIR FIRST MEETING, THE QUESTION OF AN OPEC MEETING AND A POSSIBLE OIL PRICE RISE HAS COME UP. BUT I DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING BEYOND THAT.

Q. THIS MEETING TOOK PLACE AT THE SAUDI ARABIAN EMBASSY?

A. I DO NOT KNOW. YOU WOULD HAVE TO ASK MR. VANCE. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 16 SEP 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BRIEFING MATERIALS, PFOR, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE304677
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/P:MKBERRY
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D760462-0591
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761293/baaaeqzy.tel
Line Count: 315
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: schwenja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUN 2004 by hattaycs>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2004 by schwenja>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 970930
Subject: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - DECEMBER 15
TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, LE, OPEC
To: BEIRUT
CAIRO
DAMASCUS
TEL AVIV
ABU DHABI
ALGIERS

AMMAN
BAGHDAD
DOHA
JIDDA
MANAMA
RABAT
SANA
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MOSCOW
NATO
NOUAKCHOTT
PARIS
ROME
USUN N Y
JERUSALEM
KUWAIT
USCINCEUR
Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006